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Austria

Poultry and Products

H5N1 Found in Three Cats in the Southern Region of Styria

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Report Highlights:

Austria's first cases of H5N1 in cats were found in Styria. The cats caught the disease at the animal sanctuary "Arche Noah" in Graz where the first domestic birds in the EU to be infected with H5N1 were reported. The animal sanctuary is located near where the bird population that had been culled in mid February due to bird flu.

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Unscheduled Report
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Austria's first cases of H5N1 in cats were found in Styria. The cats caught the disease at the animal sanctuary "Arche Noah" in Graz (capital of the southern province of Styria) where the first domestic birds in the EU to be infected with H5N1 were reported. The animal sanctuary is located where the bird population that had been culled in mid February due to bird flu.

On Monday, March 6, the Austrian Health Ministry confirmed that three cats had tested positive for H5N1. So far, the cats have not shown flu symptoms. By the second test the three cats no longer tested positive. The provincial government decided not to kill the animals but to bring them under quarantine together with all 170 cats at the sanctuary. Feed or feed bins might be the possible sources of the transmission of the bird flu virus. Veterinarians at the Austrian Veterinary University are observing the animals at a special secure quarantine station in the Burgenland province. The scientists expect to gain new valuable insights on the virus.

The animal sanctuary has been closed and disinfected. All birds at the sanctuary had been culled on February 17. Out of the culled birds, 14 tested positive for H5N1 (swans, ducks, chickens and a goose). The staff at the sanctuary is regularly tested for the virus. Since the appearance of avian flu infection in cats, dogs are also now being tested.

At the moment, the Austrian Health Ministry has not required pet owners to keep their pets indoors but advises the population to house cats within the protection and surveillance zones (3 and 10 km around outbreaks). Contact with stray cats should be avoided and dead or sick cats should be reported to the police.